



# Chambers's Journal

## SIXTH SERIES.

### SOME OLD FURNITURE.

By Mrs SCOTT-MONCRIEFF.



IT only requires a moment's thought to realise that we have no ideals of comfort or of home apart from furniture. Bare walls mean little to us, and cannot be loved; but when you people empty rooms with familiar furniture, the table which has made you welcome to so many a meal, the chair whose remembered easiness is pleasant to look forward to, and your own bed, whose pillow is just the right height, whose blankets are neither too heavy nor too narrow nor too short, but all kindly and comfortable—where these are, there is home.

Man is a spirit, a temporary sojourner among things material; and most human spirits vanish from the scene leaving no lasting impress of their tastes or character on the material world, few tangible proofs that they once were. Yet to the spirits who succeed them as tenants of the globe such proofs are often dear. All humanised matter, if I may so call it, is by virtue of that association raised to a higher power; and therefore a rudely-shaped arrow-head arrests the ploughman's attention among other flints.

When to the evidence of handicraft we can add a knowledge of the hand, that which was wrought becomes a relic, and such trifles as Galileo's first telescope or Raphael's sketches are held precious beyond words. Outside this inner, most sacred circle of such treasures lies the habitable world of things man has taken for his own, and made his mark on, and so rendered more desirable to his successors. This process of humanising dead matter cannot be carried out wholesale. Associations, like moss on stones, must have time to grow. Little by little the individual human impress is given, until at last everything in the house has become part of the home, interesting and endeared because of all the memories it suggests. Eliza Cook expressed a world-wide sentiment and defied a purely imaginary critic when she took up poetic arms to defend the love she felt for her mother's old arm-chair.

Some are born to inherit old furniture with all its associations; others, the most part of men, having grown out of their father's house, and wearying of a nomadic, unfurnished life in furnished lodgings, resolve to strike root in the world for themselves. Then are bought the tables and chairs, the beds and carpets, and the associations begin to grow. Then even the wise need a word of warning. Some things are more lovable, will gather associations much sooner, than others; and if you want your home to be a pleasant place, you must abjure the companionship of ugly, characterless, inharmonious furniture. Do not buy wholesale or in suites. Leave alone the cabinet-maker's ideal circle—the lady's chair, the gentleman's chair, the six small chairs upholstered to match. Buy each chair or table as thoughtfully as if it were a picture; make each your own by conscious affinity, not merely by money. These silent elements of your home are capable of ceaseless soothing or annoyance, and in choosing them at the outset even the wisest may err. Therefore take thought.

It has always seemed to me a fatal flaw in Milton's paradise that our first parents had no furniture. Their life, it appears, was but a succession of picnics, and a picnic, we know, is only tolerable because of the zest it lends to the sense of getting home again. Adam and Eve do not seem to have had a stick of furniture. Eve heaped the table for dinner, it is true; but it wasn't a real table, only a mossy makeshift; and in all probability, until they became cave-dwellers, and began with toil to chip the dark recesses into roomier seats and smoother sleeping-places, neither Adam nor his wife can have understood what a home meant.

We cannot tell with any certainty when the first portable furniture was invented; and, to judge by the Ark as it survives among our children, Noah was either ignorant of such things, or—and more probably—nobly denied himself their use for the time being, in order to leave more

room for the animals. But long before Cowper somewhat apologetically sang the sofa, Homer was proud to enumerate the cherished and decorated pieces of furniture in the tents of the heroes before Troy, and described Odysseus's pleasure in seeing once more his own beautiful bed as sympathetically as any other incident of the return; while that he had a second-best bed is one of the very few personal facts we know regarding our Shakespeare. Shades of Ulysses and Shakespeare! A bed was a bed then! In Greece, a couch worthy of a hero; in England, a miniature stage of life, with its tapestried roof, and hangings and curtains that rose or fell with fitting pomp on the great scenes of the domestic drama. Round the canopied four-poster was passed the cradle-cup after the birth of the heir, and again around it shone bright serried tapers when the dead lay in state. Comedy, too, played her part on this stage. Here Christopher Sly was laid, to awaken and find himself a lord; and between these close-held curtains has not the night-capped, spectacled face of Pickwick peeped, when that strayed reveller called out very loudly, 'Ha—hum!'

Tragedy, moreover, knew how, in the pages of bygone fiction, to lure the weary traveller into the curtained shadows of such a bed, and then, having extinguished his light and waited till he slept, would silently lower the heavy canopy to smother him and enrich a fiendish landlord. Yes, these beds were full of dramatic possibilities, denied to their machine-made brass and iron successors. The plain iron camp-bed of a Wellington does indeed command our reverence; but lesser men have no glory to lend to such a couch. The Great Bed of Ware is now but a name; and even in Devon, that county famous for great carved bedsteads, their numbers wane. Modern art-vandals buy and dismember these stately pieces of furniture, and their mighty posts are adapted to strange, high-art ends.

From beds, the first of all furniture, let us turn to tables, in all probability second. Synonymous with hospitality, the centre of council, the core of King Arthur's order of knighthood, the mahogany-tree of our latter-day goodfellowship of wits, perhaps the first superfluity to differentiate man from his arboreal kin, how rapidly have the uses of the table multiplied! Tables and side-tables groan metaphorically under feasts to celebrate every species of social event, and yet more tables are needed everywhere, for a hundred other uses. For books, for the toilet, for playing cards, for flowers, for the child's toys, for the scientist's instruments, for the clerk's pen and ink, for the surgeon's demonstration, for the seamstress's sewing-machine—for each of these and many more is a special table devised.

Chiefly with the rites of hospitality has the table identified itself and won in such service its laurels. Which of us has not felt himself tacitly welcome at a thousand tables of all time? We

have come with Telemachus to the house of Menelaus, and seen still fair Trojan Helen spread the board, and give freely of such things as she had by her, until we put from us the desire of meat and drink, and fell to telling tales by the fire. We have drunk tea in every parlour in Cranford, and have more than once sneaked to sup, and that snugly, with Mrs Gamp, on a little bit of pickled salmon, with a tiny sprig of fennel and a sprinkle of white pepper, not forgetting the cucumber. We have shared, unwittingly, poor Ser Federigo's falcon, and afterwards the Lady Giovanna's remorse. Tom Pinch asked us to dinner when Ruth made that famous beefsteak pudding; and we were of the ill-assorted party in the Pavilion on the Links when a noise like that of a wet finger on the window-pane interrupted Mr Huddlestons's tale, and in an instant fear made every face as white as paper. We have been guests at the Colonel's table, both before and after the allegorical silver coco-nut tree figured as its centrepiece; and have breakfasted 'by an open window that looked on the brine through nodding roses,' with Richard Fernald and his Lucy in their honeymoon days, believing as little as they did the wise Berry's axiom, 'Kissing don't last: cookery do!'

A truce to tables! What of chairs, whose kind arms are always open to the weary, irrespective of their deserts? No friend can be so relied on to use you after his own honour and dignity as can your arm-chair; indeed, so often does a seat give as well as receive honour and recognition that we often ignore the temporary occupant and talk of the country as obedient to the throne, and expect a council to submit to the rulings of the chair. Far back among the mystic beginnings of English history we find the chair—

Fashioned by Merlin ere he passed away,  
And carved with strange figures; and in and out  
The figures, like a serpent, ran a scroll  
Of letters in a tongue no man could read.  
And Merlin called it the 'Siege Perilous,'  
Perilous for good and ill; 'for there,' he said,  
'No man could sit but he should lose himself;'  
And once, by misadventure, Merlin sat  
In his own chair, and so was lost.

At the institution of the Round Table Order, when the Bishop of Canterbury had been fetched to bless the sieges of the knights 'with great royalty and devotion,' and a hundred and twenty good knights chose their seats, none dared venture to take the Siege Perilous. Void was it until, near the end of Arthur's reign, young Galahad, the son of Elaine and Lancelot, came to court for the first time. The hermit who brought him lifted up the cloth of the siege; and, lo! the mystic scroll at last ran clearly, 'This is the siege of Galahad, the haut prince.' Then Galahad, albeit he was of tender age, sat him down therein, and all the knights marvelled.

As romantic is the story of the ivory chair, 'a

right noble chair and a rich,' which my Cid the Campeador won from the kings of Valencia, and placed for himself next the king's, in the Cortes at Toledo, with a hundred of his knights to guard it for him. It was of such subtle work, says the chronicle very quaintly, 'that whoso beheld it would say it was the seat of a good man.' After the death of Ruy Diaz the ivory chair was taken to the monastery of San Christoval, and placed next the altar of St Peter, under a costly tabernacle emblazoned in azure and gold, and there was enthroned the embalmed body of my Cid, firm and comely as in life, with his right hand on his sword Tizona. From that ivory chair he seemed to start by miracle some ten years later, when an inquisitive Jew thought impiously to take him by the beard. My Cid in wrath drew his sword a palm's-length from the scabbard, and the swooning Jew was converted on the spot to the true faith. So the chair of a good man shared his apotheosis; and we turn to the history of Scotland for an antithetical instance. Simon Lord Lovat, of infamous memory, had, we are told, his own 'great easy-chair,' not the spoil of war. It was, we may suppose, of fittingly sinister appearance, for it had been made specially to suit his unwieldy bulk. In this chair the old rogue sat on the fateful day of Culloden in the house of Gortulig, his chamberlain, waiting for news of the battle. When the evil news came,

and all were fugitives, says Mrs Grant of Laggan, 'the first thing set about was to dispose of Lovat's great chair, lest it should be the means of tracing his flight.' It was loaded with lead and sunk in the loch. Lovat himself was carried in a litter to a soon-discovered place of hiding, and thence to the Tower for trial and execution.

To these famous chairs, whether of true men or traitors, we must add Sir Walter Scott's chair still to be seen in his library at Abbotsford, and Dr Johnson's fragment of a chair, doubtless long since become firewood, of which Dr Burney used to tell. Johnson, after dinner, took his friend up into his attic in Gough Square. 'We found there,' said Dr Burney, 'five or six Greek folios, a deal writing-desk, and a chair and a half.' Johnson, giving to his guest the whole chair, took himself the other, which had only three legs and one arm, maintaining the while such a dignified unconsciousness of anything to be deprecated in his circumstances that his guest forgot them too in enjoyment of the riches of his conversation.

Beside these seats of the mighty what poor affairs are our modern club lounges!—haunts of inglorious ease, well satirised by Pope in those lines of the *Dunciad* where he pillories the effeminate, whom he saw

Stretch'd on the rack of a too easy chair,  
And heard thy everlasting yawn confess  
The pains and penalties of idleness.

## OF ROYAL BLOOD.

### A STORY OF THE SECRET SERVICE.

#### CHAPTER XX.—AT THE BRITISH LEGATION.



ELANIE'S mysterious friendship for this unprincipled outcast was extremely puzzling. Although she did not speak of him as though he were her lover, yet it was extraordinary that she should have used her influence with her uncle, the Emperor Francis Joseph, to secure his release.

As she sat there talking, a wan figure in her dead-white dress, with my tennis-coat about her shoulders, she presented the appearance of one oppressed by some knowledge she dared not divulge. In her pale, agitated face was a strange look, as if, although haunted by some inexpressible fear, she nevertheless tried to preserve her self-control. She was now as calm as she had ever been; for her outward agitation had passed, and her brief sleep had refreshed her. I became more and more impressed, however, with the belief that the real reason of her solicitude for this man Krauss was because she loved him. Nevertheless, I could not fail to notice that in her eyes, as she gazed upon me, was that genuine love-look which can never be feigned,

that glance which is only seen in the faces of those in whose hearts burns the unquenchable fire of true love.

Yet hers was a strange character, and the more I sought to analyse it the more complex it appeared. That she was honest, open-hearted, and unassuming I well knew. Never once during our friendship had she sought to impress me with a sense of her superior birth, but rather to place herself upon even a lower level than myself. I often thought how strange it was that, while the world unanimously declared her to be possessed of that unbending dignity and pride characteristic of the Hapsburgs, she was sweet, affable, and purely womanly towards me. Only when I approached the subject of her secret did she shrink from me, and her attitude was—I could not disguise it—an attitude of guilt. My curiosity had been whetted by this strange incident, and I strove by every means to ascertain from her the reason why Krauss had attacked her.

'Was it money he sought of you?' I asked presently.

But she shook her head, saying, 'No; it was not money he wanted.' Then she added quickly, 'Philip, refrain from questioning me further. I can never give you an explanation.'

'Not although you love me?' I asked, looking full into her great dark eyes, so full of affection and tenderness.

Her gaze met mine boldly, unflinchingly; but she responded in a low, firm voice, 'No, no. Although I do love you, Philip, I can tell you nothing—absolutely nothing!'

I sighed in disappointment. It was apparently useless to cross-question her further, and I feared to annoy her; but I urged her to confide in me, and for the thousandth time repeated my declarations of affection. She heard me, with a sweet smile of contentment upon her lips. It was a strange wooing in the silence of the night; and so affected she became that I felt more than ever confident that ours was not a mere flirtation, but a genuinely reciprocated affection.

At last she rose to go, and as we stood together I placed my arm about her neck slowly and tenderly until her head gently rested upon my shoulder. She did not resist. The supreme look of contentment and happiness upon her fair face told me that she was mine; therefore I bent and for the first time tenderly kissed her lips.

'Ah!' she murmured; 'I do love you, Philip. I, alas! love you. Why I cannot tell. It is fate that has thus cast us together, and I shall love you always—always!'

'Your words bring joy and gladness to my heart, dearest,' I answered, again kissing her, and then for the first time she raised her head until her lips met mine in a passionate caress.

'Philip,' she whispered softly in a sweet, calm voice, looking at me gravely, though tears stood in her eyes, 'take this, and wear it always as a souvenir of the great service you have rendered me to-night. You saved my life!'

She drew from her finger a beautiful ring set with a single ruby, and, taking my hand, gently placed it upon my little finger. Then, raising it to her lips, she imprinted a kiss upon it.

'I will wear it always,' I answered fervently. 'It will serve to remind me of you when we are apart—not that I shall require any aid to memory; but you have kissed it, you have given it your benediction, and it shall never leave my finger.'

'Remember, when you look upon it, Philip, that whatever may occur there is but one man on earth that I have ever loved, and that man is yourself.'

I clasped her to my breast, and her hot tears of joy rained fast as she buried her head again upon my shoulder; while I, in that ecstatic enchantment which knowledge of a reciprocated love can alone impart, kissed her hair and soothed her with the fervently passionate phrases which

rose to my lips. What I said I know not; all I remember is that the gray dawn stealing through the drawn curtains suddenly caused us both to recollect that it was time she had returned.

Then, after many final words, both of us equally loath to part, we went down into the boulevard again, she with my tennis-coat still about her shoulders. At that hour, just as dawn was breaking, the wind swept chilly down the great leafy avenue; but, fearless of footpads—for it was now light—we walked together along the leafy *allée* until we reached the Place du Trône, where the great stone lions guard the entrance to the gardens of the Royal Palace; then, skirting the walls for a long distance, we turned at length into the Place des Palais, where the great gray façade of the royal residence faces the Park. Together we proceeded to the opposite end of the building, when Mélanie suddenly halted at a side-door before which a sentinel with bearskin shako and overcoat was pacing.

The instant the man recognised her he started and stood at attention, exclaiming, 'Pass, your Royal Highness!'

She turned and shook my hand, saying in English in a half-whisper:

'Good-bye, Philip. Think of me always, as I think always of you.'

'Good-bye,' I whispered, bending low over her hand. 'Good-bye, Mélanie—my love, my life.'

In an instant her rustling skirts swept past me, and she had disappeared, and the door was closed after her.

On my return to my rooms I sat alone for a long time pondering deeply, and calmly viewing the situation. Try how I could to conceal the fact, it nevertheless remained glaringly plain that I had, by loving Mélanie, departed from the first tenets of my religion as a diplomatist, besides having neglected to a great degree the special duty for which I had been nominated to Brussels. Had not the Marquess of Macclesfield, the greatest diplomatist of his age, told me plainly the folly of allowing myself to be drawn into any serious affair of the heart? The more I reflected, the more impossible seemed our happiness. Yet upon my finger was that magnificent ruby, her pledge of affection, which I examined and admired in the bright light of early morn, while ever in my ears rang those impassioned words of hers: 'Philip! I shall love you always.'

That same day at noon I went, as usual, down to the Legation, and was occupied with some clerical work until nearly three, when Sir John came in hurriedly, having had a long interview with the Minister of Foreign Affairs regarding a question relative to the Congo boundary.

'I must send a special despatch to London,' he said, laying down his hat and seating himself at once at his table to write. Then, when he had finished, I took from the safe the cipher-book



and reduced what he had written to an amazing array of figures upon the fresh combination of numbers as announced in the despatch Graves had brought. There was nothing startling in it; but it was imperative that the British Cabinet should give its decision at once, in order to forestall German encroachments.

Having concluded, I suddenly recollected that we had no despatch-box save the one from which the King's correspondence had been stolen—a fact which I announced to the Ambassador.

'Then we must use that,' he answered. 'Giffard wants to go for three days' leave in London, so he will take it.'

I took the box from the locked cupboard wherein I had put it on its being returned to us, and placed it on the table, a small case covered with crimson leather which bore the chipped wax of many previous seals. Well worn and much battered by continual journeys between Downing Street and the various capitals of Europe, it had in its time contained many remarkable secrets of State. It was locked; therefore Sir John took out his key and inserted it. But it would not turn. Again he tried, but with no better result. The wards of the lock seemed jammed. I took the key and endeavoured to open it, but on examination detected for the first time something unusual in the appearance of the keyhole. It was different in shape and larger than the small curved slit in the Foreign Office despatch-boxes. This keyhole was, however, the keyhole of an ordinary lock; and although the key held at Downing Street had once opened it, our key now refused to turn. At once I pointed out my discovery to Sir John; and then a few moments later, when we got the box open, we both made a very startling discovery. The box was only an ingenious imitation of those well-known caskets which are sent out from Downing Street. It was of the same size; the leather was of the same shade—a soiled and discoloured red; but on close examination we saw that all the seals had been carefully made and chipped away in order to give it an appearance of being well worn, and even the sunk brass handle had been discoloured by acids to give it an appearance of long usage. By the lock, which proved to be quite a common one, and the fact that it was lined inside with imitation leather instead of real morocco, it was proved conclusively to be only a cleverly contrived duplicate.

Instantly the truth was plain. The box containing the King's secret correspondence had been changed for this; and so cleverly had the exchange been made and the bogus box prepared that neither Graves nor ourselves had, until that moment, discovered the ingenious fraud.

'This only shows how determined were the thieves to obtain possession of the papers,' observed Sir John thoughtfully. 'The manner in which this despatch-box has been prepared is

proof positive that the theft had long been premeditated. It was done by no ordinary thief—of that we may rest assured.'

'The facsimile of the despatch-box is marvellous!' I said. 'Look at the seals. They bear every resemblance to those on a genuine box. All is genuine save the lock and the lining.'

'The lock,' observed the Ambassador, 'must have been of so ordinary a character that the key at the Foreign Office shot back the bolt when they opened it. The ingenuity of these scoundrelly spies is simply amazing.' Then he stood regarding the box in deep, thoughtful silence.

This was certainly a curious discovery; but it at least cleared up the mystery of how the file of correspondence had been stolen. The seals upon that bogus box were, curiously enough, impressed by the private seal which had apparently been manufactured in exact imitation of the one actually in use, every care being taken to render the exterior identical with the one carried by the Queen's messenger. We certainly were now aware of the means adopted by the thief or thieves; but the crucial question was as to who had so carefully planned and committed the theft which had placed England in such jeopardy.

On the following night I accompanied Sir John, Lady Drummond, and Frank Hamilton to a reception by the Count of Flanders at his palace in the Rue de la Regence. It was a very brilliant affair, a veritable phantasmagoria of striking uniforms and tasteful toilets, and I strolled through the great, heavily-gilded rooms, eager of course to catch sight of Mélanie. Their Majesties were coming, and it was certain that she would accompany her friend the young Princess Clementine. Therefore I waited anxiously; for, hedged in by royal divinity as she was, I had not been able to catch a single glimpse of her since that gray hour of dawn when she had given me the whispered assurance of her love as she disappeared into the Palace. Hourly I had thought of her. Upon my mantelshelf was a fine panel photograph of her which I had bought in the Montagne de la Cour; and often when I looked at it her beautiful face seemed to shine down upon me with an expression of purity, tenderness, and love. More than once, when one or other of my diplomatic friends looked in for a whisky and soda—a beverage unobtainable at the average café—I had been compelled to remove it; hiding my idol lest suspicion might be aroused of the true state of affairs. Attachés and secretaries are particularly sharp to detect any affairs of the heart; for they are usually gallants, and their knowledge of the prettiest women in the capital is generally encyclopædic. So I was compelled to act with the greatest discretion, keeping my secret locked within my heart lest I might betray myself and afford food for gossip. The Princess had im-

pressed upon me the virtue of silence, and her every wish I held as law.

I had been chatting with the ubiquitous Yermoloff and his gray-whiskered chief, brilliant in his white Russian tunic, which glittered with stars ranging from that of the coveted St Andrew down to the last cheap decoration of the Sultan. They had been speaking of that subject ever upon the lips of diplomatists—the European situation; but I held a discreet silence, detecting in the trend of their gossip a desire to learn something from me.

At last I espied an elderly English lady who was resident in Brussels, the Dowager Countess of Bessington; and, seizing this opportunity of leaving my friends, I walked across to pay my respects to her. She was a rather stiff old lady of the ancient school, unbending to all but her equals; but, as she was a particular friend of Lady Drummond's, I always endeavoured to be polite to her. Truth to tell, however, she was a sour-tongued, mischief-making old woman, who, if not continually grumbling at the British chaplain's Broad Church notions, amused herself by inventing some startling scandal or other regarding women in Brussels society. Lord Bessington, her son, was in the Guards at home, a very popular fellow and a great friend of Giffard's. As I sat talking to her, dozens of people I knew strolled past us, nearly all of them with high-sounding titles except the poor diplomats, whose position in society is always twice as high as the depth of their pockets warrants.

Suddenly, amid the gay, laughing crowd, there appeared the King himself, in his striking uniform and with the glittering star at his throat, but looking, I thought, a trifle pale and worn. With a word of excuse to her ladyship, I rose and saluted him.

The instant he saw me he crossed, and exclaimed in a low voice, so that none around should hear:

'Crawford, you have not yet sent that woman to me. Recollect, I must see her—I must—you understand.'

'I have not yet been able to discover her whereabouts, your Majesty,' I answered. 'I am exerting every endeavour to do so.'

'Find her. Send her to me,' he cried in impatience. 'Every moment that I lose is of consequence. You know her; I do not. In this matter you can render me, if you will, the very greatest service.'

'It is my earnest desire to serve your Majesty,' I answered, with a bow, puzzled at his eagerness; for he had evidently come in search of me.

'Then spare no effort to find that woman Kohn,' he said in a low tone; then he turned quickly, with that pleasant smile which he could assume at will, to greet a high-born and stately woman who had advanced and loyally bowed before him.

Behind me, as I turned, I saw the Archduchess Stephanie, a tall, dark figure in primrose, blazing with diamonds, standing in conversation with Lady Drummond; and a little beyond stood the King's youngest daughter, the Princess Clementine, chatting to the young Count de Montaigle, in the uniform of that smart corps the Guides. The royalties had arrived; therefore I passed on, eagerly searching everywhere for the woman I loved. I went through room after room, those huge dark-panelled salons with their wonderful ceilings and polished floors; but I saw nothing of her. The Count and Countess of Flanders had finished the formal reception of their guests, and had returned to join them; but the function, brilliant as it was, possessed no attraction for me, owing to the absence of Mélanie.

At length, after wandering aimlessly, I came across Baron Vandervoerde, the Controller of the Royal Household, and observed to him:

'The Hapsburgs are not here. How is that?'

The short, stout, full-faced man glanced at me, and answered:

'They have left Brussels, m'sieur. The Princess and her daughter departed suddenly at midday.'

'Gone!' I exclaimed, dismayed.

'Yes; to Brandenburg,' answered the Baron. 'Their visit to Brussels has been much longer than usual this year, although their departure was very sudden.'

I turned away, disappointed and dejected. Mélanie, although she declared that she loved me, had left for Germany without a single word of farewell. By her departure the light of my life had been suddenly extinguished, and I strode out from that gay assembly plunged in deepest melancholy. To remain there longer was impossible, now that I knew she would not be present. I had come there solely for the purpose of speaking with her; but, alas! she had gone, and perhaps I should never again see her.

Wearily I wandered home to my rooms, my mind full of grave apprehensions, for I loved her madly with that true ardent affection which comes to a man only once in his lifetime. As I entered, however, my gaze fell upon a letter which, my man explained, had been delivered by hand.

I turned over the envelope eagerly. There was upon it the embossed cipher of the Hapsburgs, surmounted by the coronet. It was from her. I tore it open quickly and read the hurriedly-written words penned in English in a fine German hand:

'MY DEAR PHILIP,—I send you this because I am forced by adverse events to leave Brussels at once. In all the circumstances, it is, perhaps, best that we should part now, rather than later, when our mutual love might ripen into a stronger affection. There are unfortunately many reasons, some of which are well known to you, which render it impossible that our acquaintance should

be carried further. I regret that this is so; but, alas! it is my fate that I am what I am. In addition, certain unforeseen occurrences have transpired to-day which, while forcing me to leave Brussels hurriedly, also utterly prevent us from ever meeting again in the future. Nevertheless, I rest content in the knowledge that I am truly loved by one who is brave, honest, and upright. Beyond, all is a blank; all is finished. A weight of bitterness and melancholy is upon me. We

have met for the last time, Philip; but I hope we shall never fail to hold one another in fond remembrance. Adieu! May prosperity and happiness ever be yours is the prayer of,

'Yours affectionately,

MÉLANIE.'

I read the letter through twice, then stood staring rigidly at the rather uneven lines of writing, dejected, inert, crushed.

## THE QUEST FOR INDIA: THE WORLD'S NEW GERMAN HIGHWAY.

By Dr GEORGE SMITH, C.I.E.



THE Quest for India—by land and by sea—has been the constant stimulus of Western civilisation from the Phenicians and King Solomon to Queen Elizabeth and the Queen-Empress Victoria. To this quest were due all the great trade-routes across western Asia, from the earliest times till the fall of the Venetian and Genoese republics. The sea supplanted the land when Columbus sailed westward in search of the Indies, and Prince Henry the Navigator's admirals voyaged south and east, revealing at once on three sides the coasts of Africa and western India. The English East India Company followed, till it swept out of its path the lower civilisation of both Portugal and Holland, and established the supremacy of Great Britain from Cape Comorin to the Indus, and from the Cape of Good Hope towards the Zambesi. Sailing-ships round the Cape of Good Hope had banished the trade-caravans of the Mesopotamian valley and the Syrian desert, when, in the year 1823, Calcutta raised a fund and offered a premium for the steamer which should first make the voyage between England and India in seventy days. Captain Johnson competed; but in the *Enterprise* he took a hundred and thirty days from Falmouth to Calcutta. The time had come evidently to revert to the quest by land, or to seek such a combination of sea and land communications as would satisfy the needs of modern commerce and civilisation, and retain the hard-won supremacy of England.

The progress of the past seventy-five years has thus far resulted in bringing Bombay within fourteen days of London, by Brindisi, owing to two circumstances, with neither of which the British Government, unfortunately, has to be credited. These are the marvellous development of the Peninsular and Oriental with the British India Steam Navigation Company, and the construction of the Suez Canal by the French. This is virtually a sea-route still. A complete land-route could now be made in one year by the

junction of the Russian Trans-Caspian Railway to the Government of India's Baluchistan line at Kandahar. This is an object apparently most desirable in the interests of civilisation; but it is certain to be postponed as long as possible by the British Government, because of our treaty-relations with Afghanistan, and the attitude of Russia to the peace and prosperity of India which we alone have created for the first time in history.

Now, an event of supreme importance to western Asia, to Christianity, and to the trade of India has just occurred. Germany, through a bank syndicate, has received from the Sultan of Turkey the concession to build a railway to Bagdad, Busrah, and Koweit, the finest harbour on the Persian Gulf, within the next eight years. This when completed may bring Bombay within ten days of London, and will come near to the realisation of the World's Highway from Europe to India by land, which Great Britain planned and worked for in 1835 and again in 1855. But the Constantinople or Smyrna-Busrah Railway is not British; and it will not be so rapid a means of communication as our own all-land route projected in 1850-55.

The story of the two British attempts at the World's Highway, in which Germany has now supplanted us, is worth the telling. When the Calcutta offer of a premium in 1823 failed to bring London within seventy days of India by sea, King William IV. and a committee of the House of Commons sent out the Euphrates Expedition under Colonel (afterwards Major-General) Chesney, R.A., in 1835. Lord William Bentinck, the Governor-General of India, having opened up the inland rivers of Hindustan by steamers, did not cease to urge the East India Company to do its duty by sea. Chesney and his large survey-party of skilled officers did their work well in transporting two small steamers from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates, after having in vain proved the feasibility of a Suez Canal forty years before the French, who at this time opposed it. When the expedition failed because of the difficult navigation of the Euphrates—but

not before its surgeon, Dr W. F. Ainsworth, had geologically shown the ease with which a railway could be made—Lord William Bentinck had turned to the Red Sea route. In 1830 his Excellency sent the *Hugh Lindsay* steamer—built by Parsee shipwrights of Indian teak timber at Bombay—to Suez in a month. Subsequent voyages brought London within fifty-five days of Bombay, and the Peninsular became the Peninsular and Oriental Company, which has reduced the fifty-five days to an average fortnight.

The Crimean war, by which we unhappily kept the Turkish Empire in existence and did more to propagate Islam than all its fanatical missionaries, seemed to Lord Palmerston to give Great Britain a right to a concession of the true line of the World's Highway from London by Constantinople to Karachi, with only the two slight and inevitable breaks of sea at Dover and the Bosphorus. Even before that war, in 1850, the late Sir Rowland Macdonald Stephenson had laid his vast project before the British Government of the day, and received letters to the chief Powers of Europe. Going on to India, he became Lord Dalhousie's right-hand in the construction of that most successful of all trunk-lines, the East Indian Railway. As soon as he could report the construction of the first section, of one hundred and twenty-one miles from the Calcutta end, of a through system long since open to Karachi, at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, he called on Lord Palmerston to act: 'The establishment of the National Highway by Constantinople, connecting Europe and Asia under the combined protection of the principal European Powers, was proposed in 1850, under your Lordship's favourable auspices, to the Governments of France, Austria, Belgium, Bavaria, Württemberg, and to the authorities in Constantinople, whose cordial concurrence and co-operation were promised whenever the time arrived to proceed with the undertaking.' The able and practical projector quoted this official language of Lord Dalhousie: 'Such an undertaking once completed, and reducing the distance between England and her dominions in India to little more than ten days' journey, would prove of vast national importance, and would be a great step in the progress of the world. The Government of India has no hesitation,' the letter concluded, 'in approving the proposal, and in promising assistance in respect of surveys and otherwise, as its authority and the means at its command might enable it to contribute.' Stephenson therefore declared to Lord Palmerston (March 31, 1855): 'The intermediate lines depend entirely upon the Sultan. . . . I will undertake to connect London and Calcutta by railway, and reduce the travelling distance to a few days, and the telegraphic distance to as many hours, before the end of the year 1865.' The man who, backed by the Marquis of Dalhousie, gave India its strategic railways would have been as good as his word.

Alas! this is the year 1900, forty-five years have been lost, and the great opportunity has passed—to Russia by its Trans-Caspian system long open to Merv (for Herat and Kandahar) and Tashkand; and now to Germany. Since we failed to follow up vigorously our claims on the Sultan for the concession in 1855, we may be thankful that Germany, and not France or Russia, has obtained the right, only somewhat inferior to Macdonald Stephenson's more satisfactory project. For this end the German Government and commercial interests have been long quietly working. They control the first part of the new World's Highway as far as Konia or Konieh, the ancient and famous Iconium. Konia is now reached from Constantinople by steamer from Pont St Karakeuy to the first railway station on the Asiatic side, Haidar Pacha. Thence by Ismid, in thirteen hours we arrive at Eski-Chehir, the junction on the line from Smyrna to Angora. From Eski-Chehir to Konia the one daily train, starting at midnight, takes us in fifteen hours. Altogether, including the crossing of the Bosphorus by steamer, and an interval at Eski-Chehir, the time at present occupied from Constantinople to Konia is little short of forty hours. A daily through express from the Bosphorus to the Persian Gulf will, of course, change all that.

This invaluable concession to the Deutsche Bank and Dr Siemens by the present Sultan of Turkey is further explained by the attitude of the Russian Government to Turkey during the Armenian atrocities and by the visit of the Emperor William in state to Jerusalem. A recent German correspondent, a member of the Alliance of Reformed Churches holding the Presbyterian system, correctly describes the energetic ruler of his country, his curious and at times fascinating personality, his assumption of super-regal powers, and his firm conviction that his labours for the welfare of the Fatherland have the Divine blessing, as appealing to the interest of the civilised world. The same writer frankly explains the German relation to both America and England as one of dislike, based chiefly on envy. 'Germany is gallantly struggling to the attainment of that prestige and power abroad which England possesses in so marked a degree. Her merchants and her marine are coming in contact with British traders and British ships in all four quarters of the globe, and they find that the best things everywhere are a British monopoly, or nearly so.' Hence such recent political and territorial developments as that at Zanzibar, resulting in the dominion of German East Africa and south-west Africa; hence the acquisition of Samoa more recently; hence this pregnant concession by the Sultan of Turkey, far more important than all.

Konia, the immediate starting-point of the German railway, and nearly the whole course of the line command lands once of magnificent fertility, of old historic renown, and of permanent



Bible interest. Four centuries before Christ the Greek allies of Cyrus the Younger passed through Iconium, then the last city in Phrygia to one travelling eastward. When the Emperor Justinian fixed the admirable road system of Anatolia, which even the Turk has not yet been able to destroy, the Osmanli's predecessor, the Seljuk Empire, made Iconium its capital. From older structures the Seljukians built the wall which still surrounds the city. It stands on the old 'Royal Road' of classical history. There Paul and Barnabas made so many converts on the Apostle's first tour that rioters drove him out of the city and followed him to Lystra, where they left him for dead. It was at Iconium that his converts, on his second brave visit, recommended Timothy to his attention. From Konia the line will stretch almost due east to Marash, not far from Paul's birthplace of Tarsus, with which it will be connected by the small Mersina-Adana line, now English, but likely to be absorbed by the new syndicate. From Marash, a centre of German as well as American missionaries, the main line will run to Bir, or Birjik, where the Euphrates will be reached. Whether the railway, then going south, will pass through Mosul, near ancient Nineveh, and the mounds which mark the site of Babylon, or will follow an easier route to Bagdad and Busra, only a careful survey will determine. General Chesney's experience will here be found of value. Twelve years ago Dr Ainsworth, the geologist of his expedition, published this opinion: that the determination of the friable character of the rock-formations which occupy the whole length of the valley of the Euphrates from Mount Taurus to the Persian Gulf—with trifling exceptions, as at the Iron Gates and the Pass of Zenobia—presents unparalleled facilities for the construction of a direct railway. This applies to the Tigris also, and to the crossing of Mesopotamia below a certain line of volcanic rocks in the north of the land between the rivers. Whatever be the southern route adopted, it will pass through the fatherland of Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees to Haran, and across the desert, over the earliest seats of the human race and its civilisation, over the ruins of the oldest and greatest cities of antiquity, over Aram and Shinar, and a portion of the land of the four rivers of Eden.

Not less important than the immediate starting-point and course of this German railway is its final terminus on the Persian Gulf. Of this little is now said; but I have elsewhere, before this, drawn attention to the political and commercial consequences that may follow. That port is Koweit or Graine, under an Arab sheik, formerly our feudatory; then deserted by us and claimed by Turkey; and now professing independence. Koweit is fifty miles from the mouth of the Shat-el-Arab, through which the Euphrates and Tigris rivers fall into the Persian Gulf. It

lies on the southern shore of a fine bay, which large steamers may easily enter, while it is protected by a shoal to the east. It ships the finest breed of Arab horses in dhows to meet the passing British India Company's steamers, which have most successfully developed the trade of the Persian Gulf since the earlier days of Sir William Mackinnon, Bart. It is a centre, also, of the pearl-fishery; and, when that is not in season, it keeps up communication with the too long neglected island of Socotra, once the seat of a flourishing Christian church. Of the population, numbering twenty thousand, a fourth are armed with Martini rifles.

At one time a British Resident controlled the place; but that is long ago. The name, Koweit or Kuwait, does not occur in the collection of Indian treaties made by Sir Charles Aitchison when Foreign Under-Secretary, save in the map of Turkish Arabia and East Africa, published in the revised edition of 1892. Great Britain has always, since the defeat of the Portuguese, policed the whole Persian Gulf, keeping the intertribal peace, and, above all, preventing the slave-trade from Africa as far as possible. If we consent, in the hands of a friendly Power like Germany, Koweit must become another or northern Karachi. From that great port of British India, which for some time has had direct railway communication at once with Calcutta across the whole breadth of Hindustan, and with central Asia at the New-Chaman terminus, for Kandahar, Koweit is only eleven hundred miles distant. From Bombay city, which Karachi is slowly rivalling, it is fifteen hundred miles.

What the new German railway means, from the political and Christian side, our readers can estimate for themselves. It is the intention of the far-seeing Kaiser of the German Empire to plant German colonists along the line, so that a large portion of Syria and Mesopotamia will ultimately become a German sphere of influence. France will find its long-continued intrigues in Syria, conducted by Roman missionaries under a subsidy of three hundred thousand francs annually voted by the Corps Legislatif, slowly but effectually checked. Russia will soon be compelled to recognise in the new line a breakwater against its steady encroachments, and in the new port in the Persian Gulf a check added to that which the Government of India is ever on the watch to apply. No one knows the situation so well as Lord Curzon since his visit to Persia and his great book on the subject. Russia's new grip of Persia, by means of its recent loan involving the control of the Custom-houses, does not affect those of the Persian Gulf, which are expressly excluded from its banking concession; but Russia will proceed with her vast and varied systems of railways, completed and projected, right across central and northern Asia. Already she has squeezed compensation out of the Sultan by a

monopoly of railway construction in north-east Asia Minor, which will carry on her system from Batoum along the southern shore of the Black Sea to Trebizond and Constantinople. Hitherto Great Britain has stood alone in checking the descent of this wave from the north, alike in Afghanistan and China. Now Germany has ranged herself by our side in constructing her new breakwater right across Asiatic Turkey from the Bosphorus to the Persian Gulf. When the bitterness of the war in South Africa is past, which Great Britain is fighting really to maintain unchallenged her control of India and the East from the Cape of Good Hope, there must be a rearrangement of the balance of power. America and Germany are our natural allies; and even the

latter will gravitate nearer to us in spite of its present unreasoning commercial envy.

More important, however, than either the political or commercial consequences of this great world-stride of Germany is the fact that, so far as western Asia and Mesopotamia are concerned, Islam has committed suicide. The glories of the Califs of Bagdad, of the Seljukian and Ottoman advances to the Christian capital of Constantine, and even to the walls of Vienna and Tours, are dimmed, and must in time be extinguished in the lands from the Great River to the Great Sea. A deadly blow has been unconsciously struck at Mohammedanism by the Sultan, who claims to be the successor of the Califs. The Eastern Question has promise of a new solution.

## ANOTHER MAN'S BAG.

### THE NARRATIVE OF EX-PROFESSOR CROSSLEY.

IN FOUR CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER II.

**I**T is not my intention to describe here the evening's gathering, for such an account would have no direct bearing upon the history which I have set myself to relate.

Let it be enough to say that the function was successful in every particular, and that my fortunate discoveries created even greater interest than I had anticipated. At the close of the lecture the chairman and Dean Houghten referred in complimentary terms to my services to Carlyle literature, and Canon Worcester spoke in a similar strain. It is true that another person expressed a doubt as to the propriety of making public the letters I had found; but I did not feel that his remarks were worthy of the occasion. It has always been my opinion that scruples of this kind have no claim to consideration when the work of a public man is concerned.

It was ten o'clock when the meeting was over, and I lingered for another half-hour in conversation with the officials. Thus it was rather late before I entered Queen Street on my way back to the hotel.

Queen Street was still fairly busy, though some of the shops were being closed. One of these was a large jewellery establishment; and as I passed the window I looked in. I had suddenly remembered Mr Ashdon's bag and the brilliant wares it contained. A minute's search told me that this window could show nothing to equal them; and with a smile I passed on. The next building was the office of the *Leicester Echo*, and here I paused again. The *Echo* proprietors published a late edition, and the office was still open. Pasted on the wall was a large contents-bill. I glanced at this in a careless way; but the first line was enough to arrest my attention.

When I saw the other lines I experienced a sudden thrill of excitement, for the announcement was startling indeed:

GREAT JEWEL ROBBERY!  
DARING THEFT IN LONDON.  
£60,000 IN DIAMONDS STOLEN!

I read the words several times before I could realise what they meant to me; then I rushed into the office for a copy of the paper. As soon as I came out again I opened the sheet to find the column I wanted.

It was a late telegram, hastily written up into a considerable paragraph, and placed under the striking and sensational heading which had appeared on the contents-bill. It took me but a very short time to read it through:

'The Hotel Petersburg, Westminster, was last night the scene of a jewel-robbery of a peculiarly audacious character. The affair was almost as simple as it was daring; while the value of the plunder obtained is almost unique in the history of such robberies. From the information which has been given to the police, it appears that the jewels stolen are valued at sixty thousand pounds. They are the property of the Countess Lenstoi, a Russian lady, who has taken a suite of rooms at the Hotel Petersburg for the season.

'It appears that the Countess wore the diamonds, which are a complete set of unique character and beauty, at the Home Secretary's ball last evening. When she returned at an early hour this morning they were simply locked in their cases and placed in a small cabinet which stood in the Countess's bedchamber. No further thought seems to have been given to them until about noon to-day, when one of the maids observed that there were curious scratches about the lock of the cabinet. She at once gave an alarm, and it was discovered that

the door was unlocked. Some time in the early morning a daring thief had entered the room, rifled the cabinet, and carried off the whole set of jewels. In his haste or confusion he had forgotten to lock the door after him.

'The police were at once called in by the landlord, the Countess having started an hour earlier to visit a friend residing at Leatherhead. Her absence, of course, made the situation a very difficult one; but every effort is now being made to trace the robber. The case is of peculiar interest, because among the jewels stolen was the historic gem known as the "Lenstoi Rose Diamond," valued at thirty thousand pounds. This stone was presented to a Count Lenstoi by the first Catharine, on account of eminent military services which he had rendered to the Russian Crown.

'It will appear remarkable that so valuable a set of jewels should have been left, even for one day, in a place so insecure. It is said, however, that arrangements had been made for their safe keeping with Messrs Margate & Fry, of Lombard Street, though for some unknown reason they had not been sent there. On ordinary occasions they would have been handed over to Messrs Margate directly after they had been used.'

I folded the paper with trembling fingers. For a while I stood on the pavement, vainly trying to make order out of the chaos of my thoughts. Diamonds!—diamonds!—everything was diamonds. I was filled with excitement, though at that moment I scarcely knew why.

Directly afterwards I was hurrying towards the hotel. Like an illuminating flash came the recollection of Mr Ashdon's bag, and my confused impressions began to find order and sequence. I may say here that I have always been rather proud of my ability to take in all the points of a complicated situation quickly, and to arrange them logically.

Mr Ashdon's bag contained a complete set of diamonds. The case which contained each separate article bore a coronet in gilt. This was probably the Lenstoi coronet. Further, I had met the man in the London train—that is to say, the train which had left London that morning. He was a commercial man; or, at any rate, he had assumed that character. Under that disguise he had lodged at a London hotel—probably the 'Petersburg.' I had noticed that he was a man of a bold and fearless disposition, full of self-confidence and assurance. I had also noticed that he had changed the subject when I began to make more particular inquiries about him and his business. He had never mentioned his London hotel. Why?

Here was a chain complete in every link; but just then I had no time to carry it farther. I had turned the corner of Queen Street, and was now before the 'Royal,' running—positively running. The hall-porter observed my hurried entry with amazement; but I did not pause. On

the first flight of stairs I met the willing and intelligent waiter who had assisted me to my dress-clothes. It occurred to me directly I had passed him that his attitude had expressed a desire to speak; but there was no time for that. I was at my own door in an instant, and found the key on the hook where I had placed it. Another instant or so and I was in the room.

I took the key inside, and locked the door. There stood the mysterious bag, on the chair where I had placed it myself. I fitted my key into the lock with shaking fingers, the straps were opened, the catches clicked back, and then . . . and then I was gazing in astonishment at the manuscript of my lecture! It was the first thing to come to sight, as it was the last thing I had packed away. Beneath it appeared other articles I knew: my plain brush-bag, my linen—and—my dress-clothes—my own! There were no diamonds. This was, in fact, my own bag. I turned it over and recognised it. Then I took off my spectacles, wiped them, replaced them, and stared once more at my manuscript. Was I dreaming now, or had I been dreaming before? Had I taken too much—well, too much Carlyle? Had the remarks of Dean Houghten turned my head, so that I had imagined those diamonds, that coronet? My thoughts were all in confusion once more.

Then I heard some one tapping at the door, and knew that I had been listening to the sound, quite unconsciously, ever since I had entered the room. I unlocked the door and found the waiter there. He was smiling, being evidently well pleased with himself.

'So you have seen your bag, sir?' he said.

'My bag?'

'Yes, sir. A gentleman came just after you had gone—about five minutes after. He was in a great to-do about the mistake—had lost hours, he said, by coming back. So, if you please, sir, I took the liberty of coming into the room and changing the bags. Hope it's all right now, sir? The two bags were exactly alike.'

I stared at the fellow as I tried to comprehend what had happened. My face alarmed him.

'He was a rather stout gentleman, sir, with a fair beard. He left his card. There it is, on the table.'

I looked at the table, and saw the card. It was the card of Mr Charles Ashdon, and exactly the same as the one he had given me. It was borne in upon my understanding, now, that during my absence the man had entered the room and recovered his spoil!

I do not know what I said to the waiter, but I remember that he went out hurriedly. In a moment of excitement I am apt to lose my temper, and in this case I had good reason for anger. Through his insufferable meddling the thief had got clear once again, and I had lost a grand opportunity.

When he had gone I sat down for a few minutes to think out the situation afresh. This set-back had roused my spirit of determination, and I did not intend to give in. I would run the thief to earth if it were in any way possible. He had come back for his bag, calculating, no doubt, that I would not have discovered what it contained. He had failed to calculate on my natural disposition to probe things to the bottom. In any case, the act of returning was an act of almost inconceivable assurance and daring; but I felt that it was quite in keeping with the character of the man. It had been justified by its success, and that was more.

What next? Naturally, his next move would be to make off as quickly as possible. He was going to Boltport, some two hours distant. In that great port, no doubt, he had confederates waiting, and there all trace of him would be lost. Boltport was an excellent place to hide in, and a very good place from which to escape over-sea.

What train had he been able to catch after recovering his bag? With eager fingers I turned the leaves of my time-table. To my dismay, I found that a train had left the Lechester station at eight-forty-five. It was now just eleven, and by this time he must have reached the end of his journey.

This was a blow indeed; and for a few moments I felt a keen disappointment. Then I gave an exclamation of triumph. Glancing more closely at the badly-printed table, I had made a discovery of prime importance. The eight-forty-five was a local train, and did not run farther than Hinton Junction, half-way to Boltport. The next through-train would not pass Lechester until midnight—to be exact, twelve-seven. Mr Charles Ashdon and the diamonds would have to wait for it at Hinton Junction!

This was enough. I thrust the time-table into my pocket and ran downstairs. A moment after I was hurrying down Queen Street, looking out eagerly for a cab. Before one came in sight I reached the office of the *Echo*, and that jewellery establishment near it which I had noticed half-an-hour earlier. The shop was now in darkness,

and the proprietor was on the point of leaving for the night. In fact, he was engaged in locking the door in the iron shutters which completely protected his window and front entrance. When I saw this I stopped.

The *Echo* report had mentioned one diamond in particular as having been part of the stolen set—the Lenstoi Rose Diamond. I knew nothing of the different classes of jewels; but my idea of a rose diamond would be simply that it was a rose-tinted stone. There had been no such stone in Mr Ashdon's bag, for they were all colourless. I suddenly remembered this, and saw its significance. It would be just as well to make inquiries before going farther.

The jeweller was a small man in a heavy greatcoat, and my conduct seemed to startle him considerably. Indeed, my first question was rather abrupt.

'I beg your pardon,' I said. 'Can you tell me what kind of diamond is called a rose diamond?'

The jeweller slipped his keys into his pocket, and stared at me in such an astonished way that I found it necessary to explain.

'I have just been reading,' I said, 'the account of the London jewel-robbery. One of the stones lost is described as a rose diamond, and I am curious to know the meaning of the term.'

The man's face cleared up considerably, though he still seemed surprised. Without further hesitation, however, he gave me a reply.

'The name,' he said, 'describes, partly, the shape of the stone. It is something like a rose in form, the under side being flat and the upper side rounded and cut in facets to a point. There are usually twenty-four facets.' Then, as though he had often been asked the same question before, he added carelessly, 'The term has nothing to do with the colour. It can be a colourless stone.'

That was quite enough. I muttered a hasty 'Thank you!' and hurried away, leaving him to look after me with renewed astonishment. A little farther down the street I met an empty cab. At my signal the driver stopped, and I got in.

'The chief police station,' I cried. 'Quick!'

## MY FIRST INVESTMENT IN 'CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL'

By A WORKING MAN.



IN the year 1847 I made my first weekly investment of three-half-pence in *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*; and every week since that date I have renewed the purchase, which has yielded me a percentage of interest that cannot be reckoned in pounds, shillings, and pence. When I tell the reader that I have perused every page of the *Journal* since 1847, he will see that during those

years I have assimilated an amount of general information I could not have found in the pages of any other periodical.

When I look at my fifty-one volumes of *Chambers's Journal*, all of them uniformly bound, ranged upon my humble book-shelf, I think no bibliomaniac ever gloated over his books with more pleasure and satisfaction than I do. To me they are a sort of historical record since I read my first weekly number. The flood of periodical



literature that has overspread the land can only be estimated by us elderly folks who began life in the second or third decade of the present century. The dearth of books, or literature of any kind, that existed in my native parish sixty years ago would scarcely be credited at the present day; periodical literature of any kind never crossed its borders. A few copies of the *Aberdeen Journal*, the oldest newspaper in the north of Scotland, were taken in by some well-to-do farmers; the tradesmen of the village subscribed for a copy, which was read during the evenings, at different houses, to groups who listened to its contents with eager excitement. During the time of the Sikh war in India, the paper before the end of the week was a 'thing of shreds and tatters.' To-day the inhabitants have their daily morning and evening newspapers delivered at their doors. At the end of every month a flood of periodicals enters the parish, which has also a library of many hundreds of books, with a reading-room attached to a public hall, the gift of a wealthy parishioner. There was absolutely no literature of any kind for young folks except the poisonous chap-books hawked amongst ploughmen; and there was evidence on all sides of the evil influence they produced on the minds of young men, often herded together in bothies, with no refining influence to counteract the effects produced by reading these ribald and irreligious books—evil effects which were in a great measure the cause of the lamentably low moral tone in the northern counties of Scotland fifty years ago.

The change that has taken place in the remote, and at that time isolated, parishes in the north can only be realised by those who, like myself, felt a difficulty, owing to the scarcity of books, in gratifying a craving for them. I shall ever remember the day that our village postmaster, an enterprising tradesman, got a copy of the newly established *Illustrated London News*. A report of the marvellous paper spread quickly over the parish, and nearly everybody came to see the wonderful production. Another sensation was caused when the first letter arrived at the post-office, bearing upon it a 'Queen's head.' It was posted at Leith, addressed to William Green, Esq. What a revolution that tiny penny stamp has caused in the postal development of that secluded place! Three times a week a mounted post-rider passed through the village, and deposited at the humble office a bag no larger than a school-boy's satchel, containing the whole correspondence of the place. At the present time three mails arrive daily, and there are three despatches; and three local post-messengers are employed to distribute the letters and papers that arrive. Surely no better proof can be given of the wonderful revolution that the penny postage has brought about in the social life of a remote country parish. Up to the time of its introduction, the pen was practically laid aside when a boy or girl left school; now it is the means

of friendly and social intercourse between members of families widely separated from each other.

I can best explain the educational progress that has taken place in my native parish since I was a schoolboy by contrasting those early days with this end of the nineteenth century. There are three schools within the parish boundary. The principal or parish school proper is admitted to be one of the best equipped in the north of Scotland, with a staff of male and female instructors; the headmaster is an M.A., and an efficient and successful teacher. But when the Queen began her reign one schoolhouse sufficed for the educational wants of the place. It was in every sense a plain building, lighted by three windows that were occasionally washed by the heavy rains beating against them; the interior walls had been plastered, but the lime had acquired the hue of dirty clay, and the ceiling had never felt the touch of a whitewash-brush. The furniture consisted of rude benches and forms, whereon sat side by side boys and girls. At one end of the room there was a fireplace, the master's desk standing near; and above it hung the only educational appliance provided, a tattered map of the Eastern Hemisphere. The scholars were, during the winter months, permitted to go to the fire in detachments to warm themselves; for this privilege each scholar brought a pent and deposited it in an oblong box behind the door. Above this box hung a long tin horn that was blown every morning at nine o'clock to summon the scholars. Rude and homely as the schoolhouse was, the man who presided over it did good and honest work. From Monday morning till noon on Saturday he was at his desk, the hardest-worked man in the parish, and its greatest benefactor. A dominie's life in those days was laborious and monotonous in the extreme. His annual holiday was four weeks in harvest; Saturday afternoon was his only half-holiday during the week, the early part of the day being spent by him in mending the scholars' quill pens. It was a curious sight to see nearly a hundred of them piled upon his desk, every one having a device or mark to distinguish it. How would a schoolmaster of the present day relish the labour of mending so many pens every Saturday morning?

No Sunday-school existed in the parish, and there was only one service in the church on Sundays. The eloquence of Dr Guthrie and Dr Candlish failed to stir the spiritual lethargy of the people; and it was some years after the Disruption before a Free church was built in the village.

But changes for the better have taken place since I left, like many of my class, to seek work in Edinburgh. I was fortunate in finding employment under the late Lord Cockburn at 'Bonny Bonally,' on the north slope of the Pentlands near Colinton, and I shall ever retain a grateful remembrance of his lordship's kindness to me. During the winter months he resided at

his town house in Charlotte Square. While there he left the care of his valuable library to me, with the privilege of reading any of the books. What a boon this was to me, who had felt the want of books more keenly than can possibly be felt by a young man at the present day!

During the spring and summer months I had an opportunity of seeing a good deal of the social life and habits of his lordship at Bonally. While the Court was sitting he drove into Edinburgh in a one-horse carriage. On his return he hurried to change his dress for a garden suit, consisting of an old, battered silk hat, a long-tailed frieze coat, a pair of small-check shepherd's plaid trousers (very short in the legs), and a pair of round-toed, Selkirk-made shoes. He no sooner donned this homely attire than he appeared on the lawn with a garden tool of some kind in his hands, be the day wet or dry. I verily believe if the departed spirits of men are permitted to revisit the scenes they delighted in while they were in the body, the shade of Lord Cockburn must haunt the walks and alcoves of the place he created with such care and taste. There was one walk he frequented when any intricate case was before him in court; he would pace backwards and forwards upon it, declaiming in a loud voice. Lord Jeffrey and he spent many an evening upon that walk, after they had tired themselves at the

bowling-green, where they played like two school-boys. James Ballantine, the Scottish poet, was a frequent visitor, and always met a warm welcome from his lordship, who held the poet in high esteem. Summing up his estimate of Ballantine's dual character in happy phrase, 'Ballantine,' he said, 'makes business feed the Muses, and the Muses grace the business.'

Lord Cockburn, in his *Life of Lord Jeffrey*, gives a graphic account of the home-life of his friend, and describes the beauties of the grounds and gardens at Craigcrook, near Edinburgh, which in many respects resembled his own beloved place. One of his favourite occupations was planting primroses on the banks of the burn that meanders through the grounds. When a worm was turned up in the process he carefully laid it on the grass out of harm's way; and this little act of humanity made a strong impression on my mind.

After fifty years I feel deeply grateful for the kindnesses I received from him. When I entered his service the four-pound loaf cost me ninepence, and my wages were less by one-half than men in my occupation are now receiving. The price of really good books was then beyond the means of most working men; and, therefore, *Chambers's Journal*, which could be had for the modest investment of three-halfpence a week, was to us of the working class a perfect treasure.

## IN WAR-TIME.

### I.



HE blockade-runner *General Lee* was racing. The whole of the frail hull hummed with the vibration of the engines. Down in her stoke-hole a double gang of firemen, naked to the waist, shovelled and pricked at the flaring masses of Welsh coal through the ever opening and shutting furnace-doors. The safety-valves carried double their load, and every rivet in the boilers screamed again under the fierce pressure. The throttle-valves stood wide-open, and the clattering engine-cranks flew clashing round in their circles. The second engineer directed the scalding-down-hose upon a heated bearing; the 'chief' was busy with a long-spouted oil-can; the engine-room crowd had their hands full.

Thirty-six hours ago they had come out of Bermuda with a cargo of boots, saddles, 'Crimean' shirts, and other contraband of war; supplemented—alas for human vanity!—with French corsets, crinolines, and other feminine engines of adornment; for, though their young heroes were at the front, there were still men left in the cities; and Confederate women must adorn themselves though war shouted at the gates.

Captain Henry Clay stood on his bridge, none with him but the mate steering. His every cent was invested in the venture. They were running for Wilmington, and already the low coast-line of Carolina showed upon the horizon. But the ruse which was to have taken the blockading squadron southward had failed. Upon their bow hung a thin faint line of smoke: a Yankee war-steamer—it could be nothing else—straining to intercept them; and, as if this were not enough, there appeared, dead ahead, and seen only as yet through the telescope, the tops of two masts—another of the 'Northern scum' lying-to, waiting them.

'There's nothing else for it!' said Clay. 'In between them and trust to luck. If they catch us they may blow the whole cursed shebang to smithereens for all I care!'

'Yes. Best stand right on,' said the mate. 'They're slow old tubs anyhow. We'd oughter be able to git through if so be's there ain't but two.'

'I can only make out those two,' said Clay, as he swept the horizon with his telescope.

Ten minutes more showed them the steamer in their path coming straight for them; the other, on the bow, was now also hull up.

The *General Lee* swung sharp to starboard and headed to the north-west. Instantly the war-ship ahead starboarded helm to head her off. Even then the blockade-runner's speed might have saved her; but it was not to be.

The mate suddenly ejaculated, 'Cap'n Clay!' 'Yes?'

The mate pointed. There, on the beam to the northward, were two more faint lines of smoke.

'Guess we'd best put back to sea, Cap. Here's the hull fleet down on us!'

'I don't seem to care a red cent *what* happens,' said Clay. 'I feel, somehow, as if I want to ram her slap through the midst of them.'

'There's others aboard here besides you,' said the mate.

'I know it. [Pause.] I don't care! I'm going to stand right on. You can go below. They won't fire shell.'

The mate looked at him and his eyes lit.

'No, b'gosh!' he said. 'I'm the man to foller ye, Cap'n Clay, if you're going on!'

'Right!' said Clay. 'Starboard the helm!'

The *General Lee* swung back in her tracks and once more headed straight for the coast.

('By the shadow of death, he's not afraid!') said the commander of the *Tecumseh*—the steamer in their path, as he altered his helm to suit.)

'It will take some shooting to hit us at this speed!' said Clay.

'That's so every time!' returned the mate; 'and if we git through there's a handy pile of dollars for us.'

Clay made no reply. He looked out over the calm, glassy sea. He looked ahead where the low coast lay shining white in the sun. Directly in their path was the black spot which the telescope said was a war-steamer. He looked at the three black shadows creeping up—one from south and two from north—he felt like a trapped animal.

'I don't like being licked,' he muttered. Then a gloom crept over his spirit; the wings of the angel of death seemed to blot out the sun.

'I guess Eunice is fairly well provided for if they hit me. It don't matter much—and she won't mind, I doubt. I don't see what I wanted to marry her for anyhow. By thunder! it would be good if we got through. Wouldn't we crow some?'

Then his thoughts swept into the past. 'Where are you, dear—you whom I ought to have married? You seem near me'—

His reverie was sharply ended: the first shot from the enemy hummed along the wave-tops, and, touching water fifty yards ahead, ricocheted clean over them.

'Now, Randolph!' shouted Clay to the engineer.

'We're doing all we know,' shouted up the engineer in reply.

The first two war-ships were now within range. Both opened fire; but such a swiftly moving object was no easy mark.

The *General Lee* raced on, as yet untouched, but in as much danger from her own overpressed boilers as from the enemy's guns. Then, suddenly, came the end.

A shot struck them. Wood splinters flew in a shower, and Captain Clay and his mate were down. Still—for a few moments—the blockade-runner raced onward, unguided. Then a man shouted the news down to the engine-room.

'Draw your fires!' yelled the engineer.

## II.

'Will you see him through, Nurse Clare?' said the hospital surgeon. 'He *must* die.'

'Is that so? No hope?'

'No; none that I can see,' said the surgeon; then he whispered in her ear.

She understood. 'Poor fellow!' she said.

'Shall I tell him?'

'Perhaps it would be kinder.'

Clay's head was tightly bandaged; over his eyes and forehead lay heavy pads of wet lint. All had been done for him that was possible. He had not yet recovered consciousness.

Sister Clare kept his bandages damp.

At last: 'Who is there?' the mere ghost of a voice.

'I am here.'

At her voice he quivered. 'And you?'—he asked.

'I am your nurse. Don't get excited; you are'—

'Did we get in?' he interrupted.

'No. Your ship is sunk. You are in hospital in Wilmington.'

'Ah! that settles it, then.'

'Settles what?' she asked in a tender voice, and she held a glass of stimulant to his lips. 'Drink some of this—and don't talk so much.' The sound of his voice woke memories within her. She knew her old lover.

'Settles that I am ruined—that's all.'

She did not reply. Oh, if he could only live, what did ruin matter?

'Yes, ruined. What will the wife do?'

'Wife?'

'Ay, I'm married, worse luck. Am I going to live?'

She did not reply.

'Don't be scared to tell. I don't care.'

'What! not for your wife's sake?'

'Well—perhaps so. But I guess she won't mind much.' His voice grew querulous. 'Am I going to die?'

'The—doctor—fears so.'

'Ah!' There was a sound of relief in the tone. Then, to himself, 'I wonder how much Eunice will care? Nurse!'

'Yes.'

'Do fellers—ever—when they're dying—tell you their secrets?'

'Sometimes.—I wonder what is he going to say?'

'May I? You won't mind listening to a poor beggar like me?'

'If it will ease your mind.'

'It will. I must talk about her to some one or I can't die straight. Where did you say I was? Wilmington?—and she's in Lawrence. She couldn't get here if she wanted to; they're surrounded. What is your name, sister? Your voice sounds quite familiar somehow.'

'Clara.'

'Clara! Strange!' Silence on both sides.

'Well, then, I wish I could see you. I can tell you better—because of your name. I loved a woman of your name once, but her people wouldn't look at me—said I was only a cursed tradesman. But I loved her. Well, you know what sailors are—racketted about every-which-way. I had to go to sea, and never got a chance home for two years; then they told me she had married.'

'Oh! what liar was that?' whispered the nurse aside.

'Eh?—did you speak, sister? Well, that got my mad out. We were in Halifax: the girls there are kinder free; and there were two pretty sisters—and I said, "I'll show her I can do as much as she can"—and I married Eunice.'

'Ah!' gasped the nurse.

'But—I can't forget Clara—and, if I'm going to die, I want to see her!'

'How can you expect that?'

He had relapsed into insensibility. As she attended to him she triumphed. 'He loves me! This other poor thing was only married out of spite; and yet—O God!—she separates us!'

Two days later.

The man's vitality, born of a healthy profession and a pure life, had astonished the surgeons. The sister had tended him through all—had never slept. A difficult operation had, apparently, resulted in success; he had fallen into a quiet, restful sleep.

She waited the doctor's coming.

'What, sister! Is he still alive?'

'It has been a sharp fight,' she replied.

'If so, he belongs to you,' said the surgeon.

For a moment hope shone in her eyes; but she shook it from her with a passionate gesture. Then she turned her attention to the doctor's directions.

'Mind,' he said as he left them, 'he's not safe yet.'

She looked down at the sleeping man.

'Dear!' she murmured. 'Why should I disturb your life? This other one has come between us; she has the legal right.'

Yet she knew that with consciousness would

come recognition. Must she give him up? Had not the surgeon said that his life belonged to her by right? She could not make the sacrifice, so she remained.

As consciousness returned and convalescence came slowly, so also came the knowledge that the only woman he had ever loved had nursed him back to life—that he owed his life to her care; yet ever in the background was the face of his wife. Thus, though they looked into each other's souls, they feared to speak. Her touch thrilled. Their eyes would not be commanded. They knew they loved, and that a bar not to be broken parted them.

'I can bear it no longer,' she said; and another nurse took her place. He guessed the reason, and kept silence. 'Wait till I get well,' he thought.

Eunice was away in Lawrence; it was impossible to get news through to her. He was thankful that it was so.

At last he was allowed to leave his bed. They met in the corridor, and she fled from him—fled to her own room. Upon the table lay the weekly paper, just brought in.

The word 'Lawrence' caught her eye.

'That is where his wife is,' she thought bitterly. Then, curious, she took up the paper. She knew—how who shall say?—knew before she read, that it was the moment of her fate:

'On the 20th of August, Lawrence, Kansas, the third town of the State, was sacked by Quantrell and his gang, who pierced the lines of General Ewing and rode fifty miles past them without discovery. Over one hundred and fifty citizens were slaughtered and the town destroyed. Two women were, unfortunately, killed by accident, one a coloured person, the other a Mrs Eunice Clay, on a visit to her sister.'

The nurse sprang to her feet, trembling, and a strange expression crept into her eyes. Was it love, or joy, or triumph?

'Poor soul!' she whispered, as with softening looks she passed into the convalescent ward, carrying the paper.

#### IN A LONDON GARRET.

OUTSIDE, I hear the hurry of men's feet,

Tramping the tortuous ways for this world's gold;

And the huge City irks me with its old

And ceaseless roar of traffic in the street.

Within these walls, in rain or frost or heat,

I tremble with desire to tread the world,

And breathe the clean air scented by the mould,

Where purple heather and pure water meet.

Ah! how these last sweet roses madden me

With longing for the mountains, vales, and fields!

Some day, perchance, when Spring or Summer yields

His rapturous store of beauty, I shall be

Beside the foaming margin of the sea,

Or roaming over hills or shady wealds.

C. FRED. KENYON.